Numb. 133

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

Quod ſi in hoc erro, quod Animos Hominum immortales eſſe credam; libenter erro: Nec mihi hunc Errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo: Sin Mortuus (ut quidam Minuti Philoſophi cenſent) nihil ſentiam; non vereor, ne hunc Errorem meum mortui Philoſophi irrideant. Tull.

From *Thurſday February* 16. to *Saturday February* 18. 1709.

Sheer-Lane, February 17.

SEveral Letters which I have lately received give me Information, That ſome well-diſpoſed Perſons have taken Offence at my uſing the Word Free-Thinker as a Term of Reproach. To ſet therefore this Matter in a clear Light, I muſt declare, That no one can have a greater Veneration than my ſelf for the Free-Thinkers of Antiquity, who acted the ſame Part in thoſe Times, as the great Men of the Reformation did in ſeveral Nations of *Europe*, by exerting themſelves againſt the Idolatry and Superſtition of the Times in which they lived. It was by this noble Impulſe that *Socrates* and his Diſciples, as well as all the Philoſophers of Note in *Greece*, and *Cicero*, *Seneca*, with all the Learned Men of *Rome*, endeavoured to enlighten their Contemporaries amidſt the Darkneſs and Ignorance in which the World was then ſunk and buried. The great Points which theſe Free-Thinkers endeavoured to eſtabliſh and inculcate into the Minds of Men, was, the Formation of the Univerſe, the Superintendency of Providence, the Perfection of the Divine Nature, the Immortality of the Soul, and the future State of Rewards and Puniſhments. They all complied with the Religion of their Country, as much as poſſible, in ſuch Particulars as did not contradict and pervert theſe great and fundamental Doctrines of Mankind. On the contrary, the Perſons who now ſet up for Free-Thinkers, are ſuch as endeavour, by a little Traſh of Words and Sophiſtry, to weaken and deſtroy thoſe very Principles, for the Vindication of which, Freedom of Thought at firſt became laudable and heroick. Theſe Apoſtates, from Reaſon and good Senſe, can look at the glorious Frame of Nature, without paying an Adoration to him that raiſed it; can conſider the great Revolutions in the Univerſe, without lifting up their Minds to that Superior Power which hath the Direction of it; can preſume to cenſure the Deity in his Ways towards Men; can level Mankind with the Beaſts that periſh; can extinguiſh in their own Minds all the pleaſing Hopes of a future State, and lull themſelves into a ſtupid Security againſt the Terrors of it. If one were to take the Word Prieſtcraft out of the Mouths of theſe ſhallow Monſters, they would be immediately ſtruck dumb. It is by the Help of this ſingle Term that they endeavour to diſappoint the good Works of the moſt Learned and Venerable Order of Men, and harden the Hearts of the Ignorant againſt the very Light of Nature, and the common received Notions of Mankind. We ought not to treat ſuch Miſcreants as theſe upon the Foot of fair Diſputants, but to pour out Contempt upon them, and ſpeak of them with Scorn and Infamy, as the Peſts of Society, the Revilers of Human Nature, and the Blaſphemers of a Being, whom a good Man would rather die than hear diſhonoured. *Cicero*, after having mentioned the great Heroes of Knowledge that recommended this Divine Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, calls thoſe ſmall Pretenders to Wiſdom who declared againſt it, certain *Minute* Philoſophers, uſing a Diminutive even of the Word Little, to expreſs the deſpicable Opinion he had of them. The Contempt he throws upon them in another Paſſage is yet more remarkable, where, to ſhow the mean Thoughts he entertains of them, he declares, he would rather be in the Wrong with *Plato*, than in the Right with ſuch Company. There is indeed nothing in the World ſo ridiculous as one of theſe grave Philoſophical Free-Thinkers, that hath neither Paſſions nor Appetites to gratify, no Heats of Blood nor Vigour of Conſtitution that can turn his Syſtems of Infidelity to his Advantage, or raiſe Pleaſures out of them which are inconſiſtent with the Belief of an Hereafter. One that has neither Wit, Gallantry, Mirth, or Youth, to indulge by theſe Notions, but only a poor, joyleſs, uncomfortable Vanity of diſtinguiſhing himſelf from the reſt of Mankind, is rather to be regarded as a miſchievous Lunatick, than a miſtaken Philoſopher. A chaſt Infidel, a ſpeculative Libertine, is an Animal that I ſhould not believe to be in Nature, did I not ſometimes meet with this Species of Men, that plead for the Indulgence of their Paſſions in the midſt of a ſevere ſtudious Life, and talk againſt the Immortality of the Soul over a Diſh of Coffee.

I would fain ask a *Minute* Philoſopher, What Good he propoſes to Mankind by the publiſhing of his Doctrines? Will they make a Man a better Citizen, or Father of a Family; a more endearing Husband, Friend, or Son? Will they enlarge his publick or private Virtues, or correct any of his Frailties or Vices? What is there either joyful or glorious in ſuch Opinions? Do they either refreſh or enlarge our Thoughts? Do they contribute to the Happineſs, or raiſe the Dignity of Human Nature? The only Good that I have ever heard pretended to, is, That they baniſh Terrors, and ſet the Mind at Eaſe. But whoſe Terrors do they baniſh? It is certain, if there were any Strength in their Arguments, they would give great Diſturbance to Minds that are influenced by Virtue, Honour, and Morality, and take from us the only Comforts and Supports of Affliction, Sickneſs, and Old Age. The Minds therefore which they ſet at Eaſe, are only thoſe of impenitent Criminals and Malefactors, and which, to the Good of Mankind, ſhould be in perpetual Terror and Alarm.

I muſt confeſs, nothing is more uſual than for a Free-Thinker, in Proportion as the Inſolence of Scepticiſm is abated in him by Years and Knowledge, or humbled and beaten down by Sorrow or Sickneſs, to reconcile himſelf to the general Conceptions of reaſonable Creatures; ſo that we frequently ſee the Apoſtates turning from their Revolt toward the End of their Lives, and employing the Refuſe of their Parts in promoting thoſe Truths which they had before endeavoured to invalidate.

The Hiſtory of a Gentleman in *France* is very well known, who was ſo zealous a Promoter of Infidelity, that he had got together a ſelect Company of Diſciples, and travelled into all Parts of the Kingdom to make Converts. In the Midſt of his fantaſtical

aſtical Succeſs he fell ſick, and was reclaimed to ſuch a Senſe of his Condition, that after he had paſſed ſome Time in great Agonies and Horrors of Mind, he begged thoſe who had the Care of burying him, to dreſs his Body in the Habit of a Capuchin, that the Devil might not run away with it. And to do further Juſtice upon himſelf, deſired 'em to tie an Halter about his Neck, as a Mark of that ignominious Puniſhment, which in his own Thoughts he had ſo juſtly deſerved

I would not have Perſecution ſo far diſgraced, as to wiſh theſe Vermin might be animadverted on by any Legal Penalties; tho' I think it would be highly reaſonable, that thoſe few of them who die in the Profeſſions of their Infidelity, ſhould have ſuch Tokens of Infamy fixed upon them, as might diſtinguiſh thoſe Bodies which are given up by the Owners to Oblivion and Putrefaction, from thoſe which reſt in Hope, and ſhall riſe in Glory. But at the ſame Time that I am againſt doing them the Honour of the Notice of our Laws, which ought not to ſuppoſe there are ſuch Criminals in Being, I have often wondered, how they can be tolerated in any mixed Converſations while they are venting theſe abſurd Opinions: and ſhould think, that if on any ſuch Occaſion, half a Dozen of the moſt robuſt Chriſtians in the Company would lead one of theſe Gentlemen to a Pump, or convey him into a Blanket, they would do very good Service both to Church and State. I do not know how the Laws ſtand in this Particular; but I hope, whatever Knocks, Bangs or Thumps, might be given with ſuch an honeſt Intention, would not be conſtrued as a Breach of the Peace. I dare ſay, they would not be returned by the Perſon who receives them; for whatever theſe Fools may ſay in the Vanity of their Hearts, they are too wiſe to riſque their Lives upon the uncertainty of their Opinions.

When I was a young Man about this Town, I frequented the Ordinary of the *Black-Horſe* in *Holborn*, where the Perſon that uſually preſided at the Table was a rough old-faſhioned Gentleman, who, according to the Cuſtom of thoſe Times, had been the Major and Preacher of a Regiment. It happened one Day that a noiſy young Officer, bred in *France*, was venting ſome new-fangled Notions, and ſpeaking, in the Gaiety of his Humour, againſt the Diſpenſations of Providence. The Major at firſt only deſired him to talk more reſpectfully of one for whom all the Company had an Honour; but finding him run on in his Extravagance, began to reprimand him after a more ſerious Manner. Young Man, ſaid he, do not abuſe your Benefactor whilſt you are eating his Bread. Conſider whoſe Air you breath, whoſe Preſence you are in, and who it is that gave you the Power of that very Speech which you make uſe of to his Diſhonour. The young Fellow, who thought to turn Matters into a Jeſt, ask'd him, If he was going to preach? But at the ſame Time deſired him to take Care what he ſaid when he ſpoke to a Man of Honour. A Man of Honour, ſays the Major, Thou art an Infidel and a Blaſphemer, and I ſhall uſe thee as ſuch. In ſhort, the Quarrel ran ſo high, that the Major was deſired to walk out. Upon their coming into the Garden, the old Fellow adviſed his Antagoniſt to conſider the Place into which one Paſs might drive him; but finding him grow upon him to a Degree of Scurrility, as believing the Advice proceeded from Fear; Sirrah, ſays he, If a Thunderbolt does not ſtrike the dead before I come at thee, I ſhall not fail to chaſtiſe thee for thy Profaneneſs to thy Maker, and thy Sawcineſs to his Servant. Upon this he drew his Sword, and cried out with a loud Voice, *The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon*, which ſo terrified his Antagoniſt, that he was immediately diſarmed, and thrown upon his Knees. In this Poſture he begged his Life; but the Major refuſed to grant it, before he had asked Pardon for his Offence in a ſhort extemporary Prayer which the old Gentleman dictated to him upon the Spot, and which his Proſelyte repeated after him in the Preſence of the whole Ordinary, that were now gathered about him in the Garden.

Errata *in the laſt*: *Col.* 2. *Line* 33. *read* able to get Eggs for his Miſtreſs.

Advertiſements.

*** **PROPOSALS** for Printing the **LUCUBRATIONS** of Iſaac Bickerſtaff Eſq; by Subſcriptions, in Two Volumes in Octavo, on a Large Character, and Fine Royal Paper, are to be ſeen, and Subſcriptions taken, at Charles Lillie's, a Perfumer, at the Corner of Beauford-Buildings in the Strand, and John Morphew's near Stationers-Hall. All Perſons that deſign to ſubſcribe to this Work, are deſired to ſend their Subſcriptions before the 25th Inſtant, it being intended to print no more than what ſhall be ſubſcribed for, and to begin on the 27th, in order to have it publiſh'd before Eaſter.

MEn's Morning-Gowns, of rich Silks, Stuffs, Calicoes, &c: (being the Goods of a Perſon that failed) to be diſpoſed of at very low Rates; may be ſeen at the Olive-Tree and Still within three Doors of Young Man's Coffee-Houſe, againſt the Horſe at Charing-Croſs. The Prices being ſet on each Gown. Catalogues of the Particulars may be had at the Place of Sale.

*** **The Paul's Scholars Copy-Book**, containing the Round and Round-Text Hands, with Alphabets at large of the Greek and Hebrew, and Joyning Pieces of each. Embelliſhed with proper Ornaments of Command of Hand. By J. Rayner, at the Hand and Pen in St. Paul's Church-yard, London. Publiſhed for the Uſe of Schools. Sold by the Author, and Jonathan Robinſon at the Golden Lion in St. Paul's Church-yard. Price 1 s.

THE Specie Bond Creditors of the Royal African Company are deſired to meet at the Sun Tavern behind the Royal Exchange on Monday next, being the 20th Inſtant, at 5 a Clock in the Afternoon.

William Weſt, Mercer, lately Partner with George Noble and William Oſwin, at the Peacock in the New Exchange, is removed to the Black-Moor's Head in that Exchange, in the ſame Walk, and Partner with Robert Sutton.

For the Benefit of the Author,

BY Her Majeſty's Company of Comedians. At the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane, on Tueſday next, being the 21ſt Inſtant, will be preſented the laſt new Tragedy, call'd, Elfrid, or the Fair Inconſtant. The Part of Ordgar will be performed by a yound Gentleman, a Friend of the Author's, who is pleaſed to act it for his own Diverſion. The Farce, call'd, The Walking Statue, or the Devil in the Wine-Cellar, will be performed after the Tragedy. With a new Prologue and Epilogue.

AT Foxhall, next above Mr. Plume's, is to be let, a very good ſtrong Brick-Houſe, 4 Rooms on a Floor, with Waſh-houſe and Brew-houſe, a Stable for Two Horſes, and Coach-houſe, (if required) with very good Gardens and Orchard, planted with the beſt of Fruit-Trees; with or without three quarters of an Acre of Land, next the River of Thames. Enquire of the Perſon aforeſaid, and you may know further.

*** **On Monday next will be** publiſhed, Bibliotheca Anatomica, &c. containing a Deſcription of the ſeveral Parts of the Body: Each done by ſome one or more Eminent Phyſician or Surgeon; with their Diſeaſes and Cures. Illuſtrated with ſeveral Hundred Figures, done by the beſt Artiſts. Publiſhed Monthly. This Fourth for Feb. 1709. contains the Anatomy of the Teeth, and ſeveral other Tracts relating to the Bones. With Two curious Plates, in which are above 50 Figures. Printed by J. Nutt in the Savoy, and ſold by J. Morphew near Stationers-Hall. Where may be had the 3 preceding Months.

*** **Bibliotheca Wichiana**; being a Catalogue of the Library of the late Hon. Sir Cyrill Wich: Conſiſting of the moſt valuable Authors in moſt Arts, Sciences, and Languages; with a curious Collection of Civil, Canon, and Common Law; Books of Medals, Sculpture and Painting. Printed from his Original Catalogue, and digeſted under proper Heads. Will begin to be ſold by Auction on Monday the 20th Inſtant, in the Inner lower Walk of Exeter-Change in the Strand, from 5 to 9 every Evening. By Edm. Curll, Bookſeller, at the Dial and Bible againſt St. Dunſtan's Church in Fleet-ſtreet: Where Catalogues are ſold at 6 d. each; likewiſe by J. Harding in St. Martin's-Lane, W. Taylor in Pater-Noſter-Row, N. Cliff the lower End of Cheapſide, R. Halſey in Cornhil, and R. Smith at his Warehouſe, the Place of Sale. N. B. In this Collection are more ſcarce Books than has appear'd in any Catalogue for many Years.

*** **New Muſick** publiſh'd, All the Songs ſet to Muſick in the laſt New Opera called Almahide, both in Italian and Engliſh, with their Symphonies, as they are perform'd at the Queen's Theatre, all fairly engraven. There is alſo lately publiſh'd, ſeveral new Pieces of Muſick for the Violin, Flute, and Harpſicord, engraven. Printed for J. Walſh, Servant in Ordinary to Her Majeſty, and P. Randall, at the Harp and Hautboy in Catherine-ſtreet near Somerſet-Houſe in the Strand; and J. Hare, at the Viol and Flute in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange.

*** **This Day is** publiſhed, **Old Rome and London** compared; the Firſt in its full Glory, and the Laſt in its preſent State. By which it plainly appears, that Lipſius and Voſſius are egregionſly miſtaken in their Over-ſtretched, Fulſom, and Hyperbolical Account of Old Rome: And that London, as it is at preſent, exceeds it much in its Extent, Populouſneſs, and many other Advantages. The Second Edition. To which is added, A Compariſon between the Beauties, &c. of Old Rome and London. By a Perſon of Quality. Sold by J. Harding, at the Anchor and Bible at the upper End of St. Martin's-Lane in the Fields. Price bound 1 s. 6 d. ſtitch'd 1 s.

Sold by *John Morphew* near *Stationers-Hall*; where Advertiſements are taken in.